Research Proposal: Safety and Professional Sustainability of Journalists in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

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## 1. Introduction and Context

This Research Proposal addresses a critical crisis facing the journalistic profession in Brazil, specifically within the vibrant yet perilous urban environment of Rio de Janeiro. As a global city renowned for its cultural dynamism and stark socio-economic contrasts, Rio de Janeiro presents an unparalleled case study for understanding the evolving challenges confronting journalists. The safety, professional autonomy, and sustainability of *Journalist* in Brazil's most iconic metropolis are under unprecedented strain due to escalating violence, political polarization, and economic pressures on media institutions. This study directly responds to the urgent need for localized data-driven interventions to protect journalistic integrity and ensure robust public information flows in one of Latin America's most important media hubs. The research will be conducted entirely within *Brazil Rio de Janeiro*, focusing on the unique intersection of urban violence, institutional fragility, and media practice.

## 2. Problem Statement

Journalists operating in Rio de Janeiro face a multifaceted crisis. According to the Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism (ABRAJI), Rio consistently ranks among Brazil's most dangerous states for reporters, with over 30 documented cases of violence against journalists in 2023 alone – including threats, physical attacks, and digital harassment. The city's complex landscape of favelas (informal settlements), police militarization, drug trafficking conflicts, and intense political scrutiny creates a volatile environment where independent reporting is often met with hostility. Furthermore, the economic collapse of traditional media in Brazil has led to mass layoffs and reduced resources for investigative units at major outlets like Globo and O Globo. This dual threat – physical danger compounded by institutional precarity – jeopardizes not only individual *Journalist* safety but also the city's democratic health. Current national-level studies fail to capture Rio's specific dynamics, making localized research imperative.

## 3. Research Objectives

1. To map the prevalence, nature, and sources of violence (physical, digital, institutional) experienced by journalists across diverse media platforms in Rio de Janeiro.
2. To assess the economic and psychological impact of these threats on journalist retention, professional practices, and editorial independence within Rio's media ecosystem.
3. To identify effective safety protocols currently employed by newsrooms in Rio de Janeiro and evaluate their accessibility to freelance journalists, who are disproportionately vulnerable.
4. To co-create evidence-based policy recommendations with key stakeholders (journalist unions, media organizations, NGOs like Reporters Without Borders Brazil) for enhancing journalist safety and professional sustainability in *Brazil Rio de Janeiro*.

## 4. Methodology

This mixed-methods study will be conducted over 18 months within Rio de Janeiro. Phase 1 involves a quantitative survey distributed to 300+ journalists (including staff, freelancers, and digital natives) from major newsrooms (Globo, O Globo, R7), regional outlets (e.g., Tribuna do Cidadão), and independent platforms. The survey will measure exposure to threats, coping mechanisms employed, job satisfaction metrics related to safety concerns. Phase 2 comprises 40 in-depth semi-structured interviews with journalists across the city's risk spectrum – from veteran reporters covering police operations in Complexo da Maré to digital journalists focused on corruption investigations – alongside key informants (UNESCO Brazil representatives, ABRAJI coordinators, union leaders like Sindicato dos Jornalistas do Rio de Janeiro). Phase 3 will include participatory workshops with journalist collectives to validate findings and draft concrete safety protocols. All data collection will prioritize ethical safeguards, including anonymity for participants reporting violence, conducted in partnership with the UFRJ Journalism School and local NGOs.

## 5. Significance of the Research

The significance of this research is multi-layered. Firstly, it directly addresses a severe gap in knowledge specific to Rio de Janeiro's media environment. While national reports on journalist safety exist (e.g., by Article 19), they lack the granularity required for effective local action. This study will provide the first comprehensive, city-level analysis of threats and resilience strategies for *Journalist* in Brazil's second-largest media market. Secondly, findings will directly inform interventions by the Rio de Janeiro State Council for Human Rights and Media Institutions like EBC (Brazilian Public Broadcasting System), potentially influencing municipal safety policies. Thirdly, it empowers journalists themselves – by centering their lived experiences and co-designing solutions – fostering professional agency within a system often marked by fear. Finally, this research contributes to Brazil's broader democratic development; sustainable journalism is fundamental for holding power accountable in cities where impunity remains rampant.

## 6. Ethical Considerations

Ethical rigor is paramount given the sensitive nature of the subject matter. All participants will provide informed consent, with clear communication about data handling and potential risks (e.g., sharing location details). Strict protocols for anonymizing identities in all outputs will be implemented to prevent retaliation against respondents. Data will be stored securely on encrypted servers managed by UFRJ. The research team includes a member from the Brazilian Press Council (Conselho Federal de Jornalismo) and an ethics advisor, ensuring adherence to international standards for research involving vulnerable populations.

## 7. Expected Outcomes and Dissemination

The primary outputs include a detailed 100-page report with actionable policy briefs for Rio's media sector and government, published in both English and Portuguese to maximize reach. We will produce a series of short documentary-style video profiles highlighting journalist experiences, accessible via YouTube and local community platforms. Findings will be presented at the annual ABRAJI Congress in São Paulo and directly shared with the Rio de Janeiro City Council's Commission for Human Rights. A key deliverable is a freely available "Safety Toolkit" for journalists in *Brazil Rio de Janeiro*, co-developed with practitioners, covering digital security, legal resources, and trauma-informed support networks. Crucially, the research will be designed to foster long-term collaboration between academia (UFRJ), media workers, and civil society in Rio.

## 8. Conclusion

The survival of a free press in Rio de Janeiro is not merely an issue for journalists; it is foundational to the city's future governance, security, and social cohesion. This Research Proposal outlines a vital investigation into the safety and professional sustainability of journalists operating within one of the world’s most dynamic yet perilous media landscapes. By focusing intensely on *Brazil Rio de Janeiro*, this study moves beyond generalizations to deliver context-specific solutions that can safeguard democracy from within its most critical information hub. The findings will equip local actors with evidence to build a more resilient, ethical, and effective journalism profession – essential for the people of Rio and the nation. We seek support to initiate this crucial work, ensuring that journalists in Rio continue not just to report, but to thrive.